

Harrison County ATC principal John Hodge looks over a satisfying career that has been all about the students

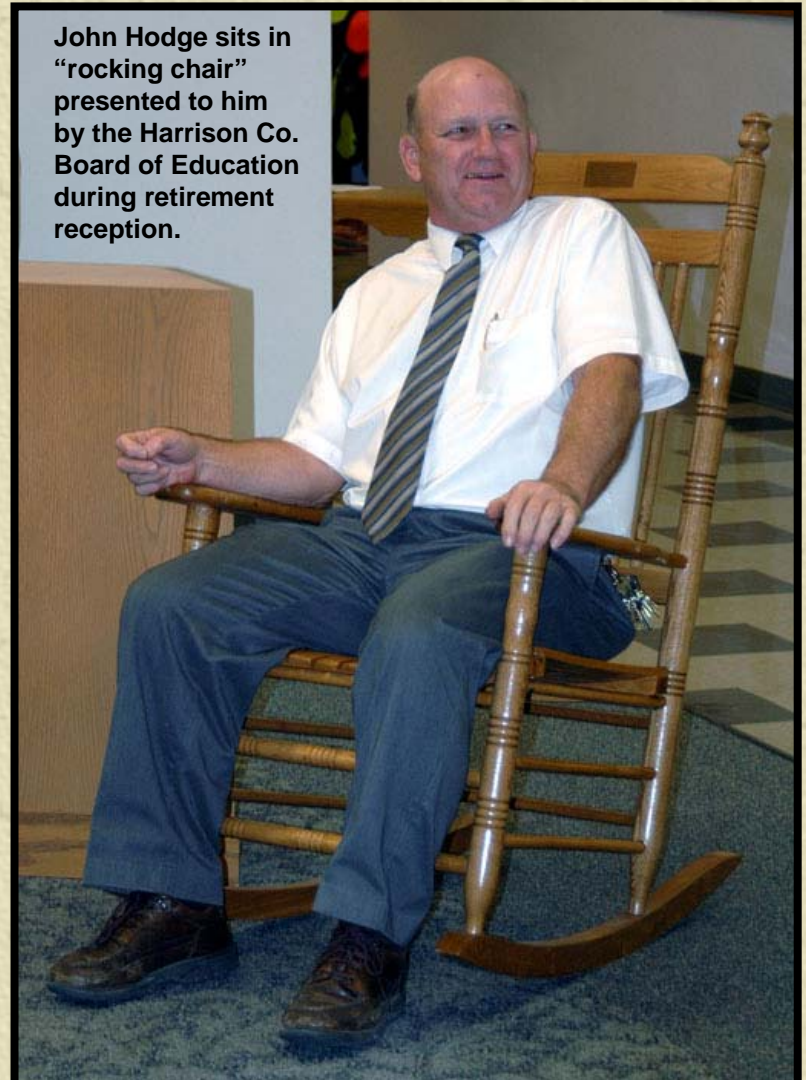
John Hodge:

“I think building a school climate that is appreciated by the students and the community at large is one of the most important contributions a principal can make.

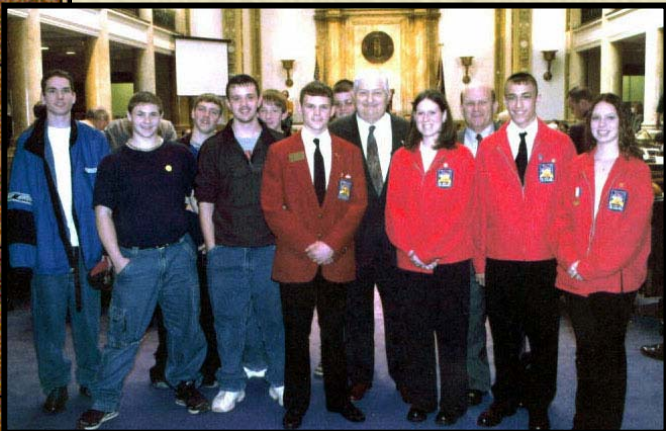
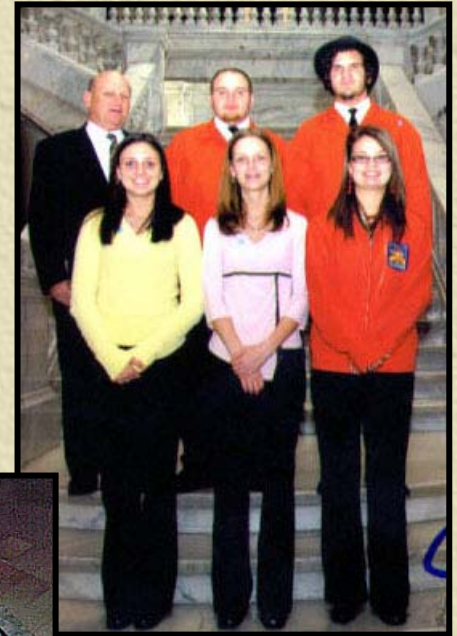
“I get a lot of compliments on what we have accomplished at our school.

“It’s gratifying to know that the community supports your efforts.”

John Hodge sits in “rocking chair” presented to him by the Harrison Co. Board of Education during retirement reception.



Harrison County ATC principal John Hodge, Jr. officially retired on Nov. 30, 2007. For the past 14-and-a-half-years he has enjoyed being principal of an area technology center – primarily because he wanted to make a positive impact on students. He will leave knowing he has made a difference in the lives of many.



Hodge has always believed it was important for students to experience leadership activities, including a visit to their state capitol.

John C. Hodge, Jr. was born to Minna Jean and John C. Hodge, Sr. as the first of six children in Sturgeon Bay, Wis. during WWII.

“My father was stationed at Poverty Island, out in the middle of Lake Michigan. Sturgeon Bay was his base of operation,” says Hodge. “He was a machinist second mate and his assignment was serving as one of two lighthouse tenders.”

Minna Jean was a stay-at-home mom but worked as a professional seamstress and tailor for a limited clientele. She was also an amateur artist who liked to dabble in still life oil painting.

“My mom got quite good at doing landscape and architecture,” says Hodge. “Many families hired her to paint their home place.”

The Hodge family ended up in Louisville, Ky. where John graduated from Waggoner High School in 1962. After graduation, he became a full time student until 1966 but lacked a few hours to graduate.

According to Hodge, “The wind was blowing and I wanted to see what was happening in the rest of the world.”

He began working full-time and went to school part-time for pleasure. In 1980, he began concentrating on getting his degree and took a few classes each semester. He graduated from Murray State University in 1984 with a bachelor of science degree in vocational technical education. He earned his master’s degree in 1990 and received his certification in administration, supervision and coordination for vocational technical education from MSU.

Prior to becoming a Kentucky Tech principal, Hodge began his technical education career in 1980 as a small engine instructor at Eddyville Penitentiary.

In 1989, his program was moved to the West Kentucky Farm Center Correctional Facility because there was a larger physical plant to operate the program.

Hodge transferred to East Kentucky Correctional Complex in West Liberty to establish the small engine program in July 1992.

“At the time, my family still lived in Cadiz and I was in West Liberty. After getting the program up and running, I began my search to locate an education position in the public sector,” says Hodge. “With my statement of eligibility and experience as a teacher, I was offered an opportunity to assume the role as principal of the Harrison County ATC. I started in February 1993.”

Photo: Laura and John Hodge



Anyone who knows John Hodge knows he is all about the students. During his tenure, he has implemented new ideas and some out-of-the-box projects to engage students in positive activities. Throughout Kentucky Tech, he is known as the “*Godfather*” of summer career camps that hook the interest of middle school students. He also has been responsible for creating a National Technical Honor Society chapter at his school.

In addition to facilitating student projects, he has served as the SkillsUSA Kentucky North Central Region director for the past 12 years. The duties of this position include helping schools in the region to get organized and helping them with the opportunity for students to participate in leadership training. Hodge also has assisted the area coordinators in promoting their local area skills competitions – which involve 17 area technology centers and postsecondary institutions.

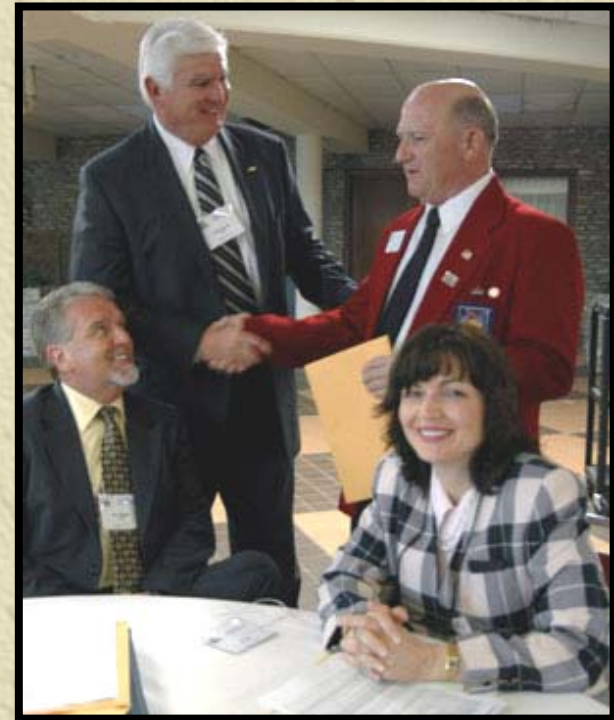


Photo: Hodge shakes the hand of former OCTE deputy executive director Lewis Carter at state conference. Front left is Don Smith and on right is Jill Ralston.



John Hodge on Career Summer Camps:

“The value of this camp is the extraordinary opportunity to demonstrate the quality of instruction to our future students and their parents. It serves an important role in building a long term relationship with the entire community.

“We are excited that 74 middle school campers responded to our promotional activities for this year's camp and that they now have a new awareness of career opportunities for themselves that they had not recognized prior to this camp.

“It's rewarding to me personally to see the ‘fire in the belly motivation’ that the middle school students bring to our school. And, even more remarkable is how well all students behave while enrolled in the camp.

“Every student is building a relationship with each teacher during this camp. If we could find a way to utilize the operational concepts that we employ during our *Exploring Technology Summer Camp* to our full-time career and technical education programs, we would never have enrollment problems.”

The Harrison County ATC was one of the first Kentucky Tech schools to implement the National Technical Honor Society program at the local level. Hodge wholeheartedly agrees with the mission of the program by supporting the creation and existence of the NTHS at his school for the past eight years.

“The goal of the society is to see that deserving technical education students are recognized for outstanding accomplishments,” says Hodge. “The people of the community become aware of the talents and abilities of students who choose vocational technical education pathways to a successful career. And we are always proud to promote the outstanding accomplishments of our students.”

2006 Harrison County ATC NTHS student inductees



John Hodge on NTHS:

“This program is a primary example of what all of us at the Harrison Co. ATC try to instill in our students from the day they walk in our front door.”

“All of my teachers support this organization and are pleased to be able to recommend their students for this honor and recognition.”



John Hodge on student projects:

“I am particularly pleased that we have been able to address some of the needs of our students outside the normal program areas such as a developing a successful skateboarding club and environmental action team.

“These are the types of activities the kids have enjoyed. With our help, our students worked very hard and learned to communicate effectively with local and county governments to establish a skate park at our Harrison County Recreation Center.

“The environmental action team implemented a recycling plan for our school to recycle paper, plastic and aluminum.

“They also were interested in the impact on the environment; therefore, through our leadership, they planned and implemented an environmental habitat trail in the wooded area behind our facility. The students designed and constructed the trail that includes an outdoor classroom.

“Our students communicated with the leadership at the four elementary schools as an avenue to provide younger children with an awareness of environmental issues. The trail and other resources at our facility are used to support field learning activities conducted by our students.”



Photo below (l to r): Kentucky Tech Area Supervisor Clifford Wells, Hodge, Ellie Pribble, health sciences instructor; Judy Burns, information technology instructor; Joe Pawley, welding instructor; Mark Sims, academic enrichment instructor and Hoyt Burns, machine tool technology instructor.

Above: Harrison County ATC secretary Tina Swinford and John Hodge.

"It has been a pleasure working with John. His determination in working with the community has been a tremendous factor in the success of our school. But most importantly, his ultimate goal has always been the success of the students."



Retirement Reception

Photo below: Madison County ATC principal Doug West and Garrard County ATC principal Jim Alford were present at John Hodge's retirement reception held at the Harrison County Board of Education.



Photo above: Harrison Co. Bd. member Edwin D. Taylor presents John Hodge with a Kentucky Colonel certificate during a special reception held on Nov. 20. Mr. Taylor also worked with Hodge at the Harrison County ATC Summer Career Camps.

A compliment by any standard is having your boss appreciate and take notice of the work you are trying to accomplish. Kentucky Tech area supervisor Clifford Wells says this about working with John Hodge:

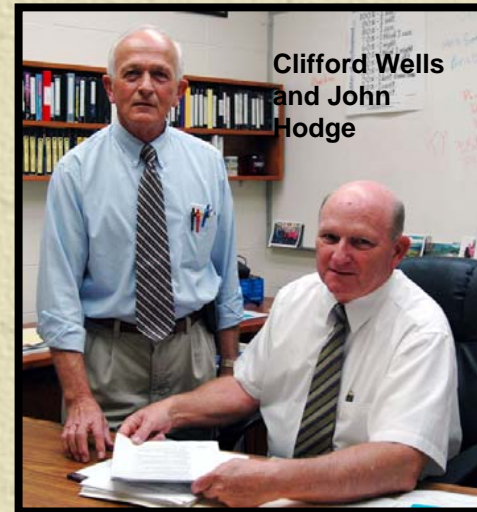
“John Hodge is full of energy and is one of the hardest working principals in our system. He loves technology and is quite comfortable when working with it in school.

“When I need to talk to John and the workday is already over, I just call the school because I know he will likely be there working and will answer the phone.

“John is totally dedicated to students, who always come first. He is committed to developing strong student organizations to provide students with opportunities to participate in activities and to develop leadership skills.

“When John takes on a project, I know that he will dedicate his energy to following through and completing the task. When we share ideas on how to accomplish a project, I find John is already three steps ahead of me and is ready to get to work to accomplish the task.

“I have enjoyed working with John and commend him for his dedication to technical education.”



Clifford Wells
and John
Hodge

John Marks, executive director, Office of Career and Technical Education:

“When I think of John Hodge, I think of a student advocate. John loves students and is committed to helping them achieve goals. When I think of John Hodge, I think of an innovator. We owe our successful career summer camp model to John Hodge because of his insight in opening up his school to develop a relationship with the community. When I think of John Hodge, I think of someone who is dependable. Why? When career and technical student organizations (CTSO's) experienced hard times in recent years, John made it his business to ensure the continued development of student leadership activities. When SkillsUSA Kentucky needed someone to step up to the plate during the formation of a statewide foundation, John was there to lead the charge.

“When it comes to serving students, John's answer has always been yes first and we'll figure out a way to make it happen - next.”

Question and Answer Session with John Hodge

1. How did you become interested in vocational technical education?

My father's goal was for every one of his children to have a college education.

I had a math teacher and architectural drafting teacher in high school who both appreciated the work I was doing in each of their classes. I hit it off with those teachers.

My goal from high school was to be a teacher. That's where I got my message to do something in life. I knew it would be math or doing some kind of hands-on stuff. In college, I took all the hands-on courses I could. I just got side-tracked for a while.

In the late 70's, I had an opportunity to teach a couple of short term training courses and to do safety demonstrations at Murray State University. Jim Creekmur, the principal at Eddyville Vocational Center, called me to see if I was interested in teaching the small engine course. I interviewed and got the job.

2. How do you think people will remember you?

I would say my commitment of service to our school and students. All of the activities that we have implemented are directed toward that commitment to our students and the community. It's all about commitment.

Question and Answer Session with John Hodge – continued

3. What are the qualities that make a good principal?

Respect for the dignity of the human being. Honesty. Having a vision for the mission and exhibiting a can do attitude. To be visible and to be available.

My thinking is idealistic on these types of things. You can't get the practical done if you don't have a focus on the ideal. It's almost a cliché, but, I believe you need to do different things and do things differently. And, to me, the question is - what do we need to get started?

4. What do you consider to be the position influences that student organizations have?

- Builds ownership to our school and the program.***
- Provides the student with a sense of pride and accomplishment.***
- Recognition of student successes.***



Question and Answer Session with John Hodge – continued

5. Is there any one student who has made an impression on you because of his/her vocational-technical education training?

I can't put out a specific name. But, for some reason, I must be a disciplinary magnet for kids because I feel that they relate to and respect me. And, I feel that I have been able to make a difference in the lives of many kids that have been identified by challenging and inappropriate behaviors.

It doesn't mean that I haven't addressed behavioral issues as they have arisen; but, I have always tried to maintain a level of humanity with the consequences for their behavior.

For example, a consequence for using tobacco products would include an after school project to remove the trash and sweep up the parking lot for our school – which includes cigarette butts. The focus is to impress to the student that a negative behavior needs to be offset by a positive behavior so that the consequence is relevant to the infraction.

When kids come to me, I'm not about making an additional problem; I'm about helping them to provide a solution.

Question and Answer Session with John Hodge – continued

6. What do you consider to be the most important issue facing vocational-technical education today?

We should be accountable for the performance in our classroom; however, there should be some way the student is held accountable for their individual learning.



Photo (l to r): Joe England, Harrison Co. Board member; Hodge, Gary Lizer, Harrison Co. Board member; Dr. Roy Woodward, Harrison Co. superintendent.

In my opinion, there should be consequences for students performing at less than a benchmark standard that are taken into consideration for the quality assessment of our schools and teachers.

One of the most important things we can do (for all education) is to ensure a system that includes student accountability for learning as well as teacher and school accountability to learning.

Question and Answer Session with John Hodge – continued

7. Is there anything that you would have done differently during your tenure as principal?

One thing I can think of ... I would have started earlier with an appropriate response to the challenges presented by our program assessment process.

8. What guidance and or advice would you provide to any new principal within the system?

Recognize the worth of every person – student, teacher and visitor. This can be done by helping them recognize their creative potential by getting to know them personally and taking time daily to recognize their successes.

This doesn't mean you have to have an awards ceremony every day - it just means that you need to carry around a mouthful of awards - always!



Photo: OCTE deputy executive director Michael Kindred congratulates John Hodge and wishes him the best for retirement.



Family photo taken during Nov. 20, 2007 retirement reception at the Harrison County Board of Education (l to r): Laura Hodge, granddaughter Mersadeez, John Hodge, Jr., granddaughter Jazmin, son Wally, and his wife Christina.

Editor's personal note: "We are driven," is John Hodge's motto. It fits his style and personality.

In my opinion, he will be remembered because of his "drive" to help students.

Many students have had an opportunity to grow and development because of his steady hand. BRAVO!

It's been a pleasure to work with John over the years and, along with everyone in the system, I wish him well.



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Written by: Fran Dundon

**Office of Career and Technical Education
Education Cabinet**

